

Remembering Glenn Miller in Europe

After more than 50 years, the exhilarating sound of Major Glenn Miller's Army Air Forces Orchestra was heard again in Europe, courtesy of The United States Air Force Band. The 19-day concert tour, which began on September 15, brought Miller's music to the England, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Turkey and Portugal. According to Colonel Lowell E. Graham, this was the first time in over ten years that a large ensemble from "America's Band" has toured internationally. Emulating what Major Glenn Miller did with his orchestra during World War II, the group traveled overseas to entertain and raise the morale of the hard working men and women of the Air Force. It was also a way to say "thank you" to the local communities that have so generously supported our troops and their families over the years.

The show, titled *Remembering the Glenn Miller Army Air Forces Orchestra 1943-45*, was created several years ago to honor Major Miller's selfless and heroic wartime contributions. The 54-member ensemble draws its personnel from performing groups within The Band: The Airmen of Note, Concert Band, Air Force Strings and Singing Sergeants. "This orchestra was designed from the start to be as authentic as possible," said Colonel Graham. "From the musical arrangements and instrumentation to the World War II "pinks and greens" uniform costumes, we have done our best to recreate every detail of Major Miller's orchestra."

Beginning in England, the first performance of the tour took place in historic Newmarket. The group then traveled west of London to perform its second show at Fairford Royal Air Force Base. After the performance, one teary-eyed gentleman told of his memories. "As a boy

I would ride my bicycle to the American compound where Glenn Miller and his band rehearsed. The guards at the gate wouldn't let me in, of course, but from there I could hear the great music. Now, after all these years, it is a dream come true for me to see this orchestra and hear his music again." The area surrounding RAF Fairford saw an enormous amount of action during the German Blitzkrieg. Miller's music lifted spirits and provided hope during that frightening time. "This concert by The Air Force Band is the best tool I have had in a long time to show our strongest allies and friends that we greatly appreciate all they have done and continue to do for us," said Unit Public Affairs Representative Captain Joseph Wedding.

The Band departed England to continue its tour on the European continent. Performances in Germany were held at the Patrick Henry Village pavilion in Heidelberg, the Darmstadt Performing Arts Center in Darmstadt, Spangdahlem Air Base and the Haus Des Bürgers Theater in Ramstein. Next up on the tour were performances in Belgium at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, and the Casino Kursaal Theatre in Oostende. With representatives from a majority of NATO countries in attendance, these two performances allowed The USAF Band to have its greatest impact on international community relations.

Traveling to Luxembourg, the mission of strengthening international ties was illustrated at a performance in the city of Wiltz. According to United States Ambassador to Luxembourg James C. Hormel, "The people here have never forgotten the many sacrifices made by American soldiers as they liberated their country from German occupation

during World War II." Before the performance began, Colonel Graham joined the ambassador and the mayor of Wiltz in a wreath laying ceremony honoring 34 members of the 28th Division Band who exchanged their instruments for weapons during the Battle of the Bulge and lost their lives defending Wiltz from the advancing German Army. "This ceremony and concert were instrumental to bolstering our already warm friendship with the people of Luxembourg," said the thankful ambassador.

Two performances took place on the next stop of the tour: Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. The experience really underscored the importance of The Band's troop morale mission, especially for our Air Force personnel serving in such a remote location. One resident of Incirlik's "Tent City," who is stationed there in support of Operation Northern Watch, commented, "Assignments like these are so much easier when organizations like The USAF Band come here and bring us a little taste of home. It helps us realize that we are not forgotten."

The last performance of the tour took place at Lajes Field in the Azores, Portugal. Weary from the thousands of miles of traveling, but filled with the satisfaction of a mission well done, Band members reflected upon their accomplishments. "Music is the one universal language which connects all people on an emotional level," said Graham. "We measure our achievement by the positive force our music has on others. Based on the delighted faces, the tears of joy and the phenomenal response we witnessed from thousands of people throughout Europe, I can say without a doubt that our tour was indeed a great success—and one none of us will ever forget."

—SMSgt David Nokes